

Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission Releases Strategy to Meet Aerial Firefighting Equipment Needs

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WASHINGTON -- The Biden-Harris administration's Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission released a [report](#) yesterday, outlining a strategy to meet aerial firefighting equipment needs through 2030. As climate change fuels longer and more intense wildfire seasons, aerial assets bring unique response capabilities to wildland fire suppression. The report reexamines existing approaches to aviation fleet procurement, mobilization, composition and quantity to set aviation management on a new trajectory for the next decade and beyond.

The Commission, created by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and [announced](#) in December 2021, was charged with making recommendations to improve federal policies related to the mitigation, suppression and management of wildland fires in the United States, and the rehabilitation of land in the United States devastated by wildland fires.

The Commission -- chaired by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell -- was tasked with developing two reports to Congress: the report on aerial firefighting and another report scheduled for release in Fall 2023 that delivers a comprehensive set of recommendations to address the nation's wildfire crisis. The Commission, composed of representatives from federal agencies, state, local and Tribal governments and representatives from the private sector meets monthly to discuss and craft these recommendations.

"Climate change and associated extreme weather events are being felt by communities across the country. We are seeing a surge in devastating floods, more energized hurricanes and a wildfire season that's now a year-long threat. Wildfires in particular are becoming a near-constant risk, destroying lives and property nationwide," said **Administrator Criswell**. "To respond to these



increasing threats, we must use every tool at our disposal while reexamining existing approaches to better protect people. This report is an example of the type of work required to mitigate climate risks and we will continue to work with our partners across the Biden-Harris Administration to improve federal policies related to America's persistent fire problem."

"Climate change has increased the duration and intensity of wildfire seasons and, with it, added pressures on wildland firefighters who are on the frontlines. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to providing the necessary equipment and resources to support their work and keep them safe," said **Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland**. "Through President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Administration is providing coordinated investments in wildland fire management and support for our firefighting workforce. I am grateful to the Wildland Fire Management and Mitigation Commission for their hard work as they guide us into the future."

"Wildfires are growing larger and more complex and business as usual is not an option in protecting communities and landscapes," said **Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack**. "Thanks to the landmark support from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission has brought together diverse voices to address problems and find solutions to these challenges. This report represents the next step in the Commission's critical work and explores how aviation resources can be best brought to bear on the nation's wildfire crisis." Findings and recommendations outlined in the report include:

- the need for the development of new or updated aviation resource benchmarks and national procurement models and the need for greater coordination with partners in these efforts,
- improvements to appropriations, contracting, staffing and interoperability to improve the use and availability of existing resources,
- improvements and limitations to the military surplus process and equipment, and
- additional considerations, including aviation resource use in beneficial fire and the emerging importance of Uncrewed Aerial Systems.

In developing these recommendations, the Commission sought to address several key themes: the need to develop an overarching, forward-looking aviation strategy that drives procurement, rather than letting aviation approaches become



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Page 2 of 3

constrained by current practices; the need to invest in both technology and people to build an aviation fleet that meets long-term demand; and the need to take an inclusive approach to the range of functions aerial resources can serve as well as the range of entities that must be included in development of a national aviation strategy.

In addition to establishing the Commission, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides historic funding for a suite of programs aimed at reducing wildfire risks, detecting wildfires, instituting firefighter workforce reforms and building more resilient infrastructure.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law also supports [landmark pay increases](#) for federal wildland firefighters, which aim to bring federal firefighter pay in alignment with their state and local counterparts, while aiding in recruitment and retention of a more permanent and stable wildland firefighting force across the federal government.

These investments support the implementation of the Department of the Interior's "[Five-Year Monitoring, Maintenance, and Treatment Plan](#)," which provides a roadmap for addressing wildfire risk on Department of the Interior-managed and Tribal lands. They also support the USDA Forest Service's "Confronting the Wildfire Crisis" strategy, which aims to treat 20 million acres of national forests and grasslands and 30 million acres of state, local, Tribal and private lands over the next 10 years to reduce wildfire risk where it matters most. These plans help facilitate the collaborative work between the two Departments.

The Commission's work builds on existing interagency federal efforts, such as the [Wildland Fire Leadership Council](#) and the White House Wildfire Resilience Interagency Working Group, and will continue to pursue an all-of-government approach to wildfire risk reduction and resilience.

For more information visit the [commission website](#) or email wildlandfirecommission@usda.gov.



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Page 3 of 3